

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 06919 181003Z

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 SP-02 INR-05 H-01 PRS-01 L-01

CU-02 /033 W

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R 180810Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5134

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 6919

STADIS////////////////////////////////

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, RP

SUBJECT: CASE OF FORMER SENATOR BENIGNO AQUINO

1. FORMER U.S. CONGRESSMAN CORNELIUS GALLAGHER VISITED MANILA MAY 14-17 AT REQUEST SEVERAL MEMBERS OF FAMILY OF FORMER SENATOR BENIGNO AQUINO. GALLAGHER STATES THAT HE WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ARRANGING OFFER WHICH WAS MADE BY HARVARD UNIVERSITY LAST YEAR TO PROVIDE TEACHING POST FOR AQUINO IF LATTER IS PERMITTED TO LEAVE PHILIPPINES.

2. AFTER CONSULTING WITH ME ON PROSPECTS FOR SUCH RELEASE AT THIS TIME, GALLAGHER MET WITH MRS. AQUINO TO ASK FOR PRECISE INDICATION OF AQUINO'S OWN DESIRES. MRS. AQUINO, WHO SPENT MAY 15 WITH HER HUSBAND, BROUGHT OUT A LETTER WHICH THE SENATOR HAD TYPED AND SIGNED. THIS LETTER, WHICH GALLAGHER LET ME READ, IS A DIFFUSE AND RAMBLING APOLOGIA FOR AQUINO'S CURRENT ATTITUDE, AN ESTIMATE OF FUTURE PERIL FOR MARCOS, AND A PREDICTION AND MARTIAL LAW WILL BE SWEEPED AWAY BY POPULAR UNREST.

3. IT ENDS, HOWEVER, WITH A RATHER DRAMATIC STATEMENT THAT AQUINO WILL ACCEPT "EXILE" FOR HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY. ALTHOUGH THE LETTER ITSELF INTERESTINGLY MAKES NO DEMAND
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PAGE 02 MANILA 06919 181003Z

THAT HIS RELEASE AND "EXILE" BE UNCONDITIONAL, MRS. AQUINO

TOLD GALLAGHER THAT SUCH A STIPULATION WAS INHERENT IN AQUINO'S MIND, AND THAT HE WOULD "REFUSE TO SIGN ANY PAPERS" FOR HIS RELEASE.

4. AT GALLAGHER'S REQUEST, I ARRANGED A MEETING FOR HIM WITH PRESIDENT MARCOS MAY 17 SO THAT HE COULD RAISE THE HARVARD OFFER IF SITUATION SEEMED PROPITIOUS. SINCE MEETING TOOK PLACE WITH MANY WITNESSES PRESENT, IT WAS NOT RPT NOT POSSIBLE FOR GALLAGHER TO PURSUE SUBJECT DISCREETLY. HE HAS THEREFORE DECIDED INSTEAD TO WRITE A LETTER TO MARCOS WHICH HE WILL SEND THROUGH PHILIPPINE EMBASSY WASHINGTON. HE WILL INDICATE ON THE LETTER THAT COPIES ARE BEING SENT TO ME AND TO THE PHILIPPINE DESK.

5. PROPOSED THEME OF LETTER IS THAT GALLAGHER FEELS "AS MUTUAL FRIEND" OF BOTH MARCOS AND AQUINO, THAT HE WOULD BE DOING THEM BOTH A FAVOR BY GETTING AQUINO OUT OF PHILIPPINES AND INTO HARVARD. HE WILL REPORT HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT AQUINO WOULD ACCEPT UNCONDITIONAL DEPARTURE AND WILL ASK FOR FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION.

6. COMMENT: DESPITE BLUSTER IN AQUINO LETTER (WHICH WAS SHOWN TO ME IN CONFIDENCE) HE APPEARS TO HAVE SOFTENED HIS PREVIOUSLY TRUCULENT STAND, AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY IS STATED IN MORE POSITIVE TERMS THAN PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. FACT THAT HE OMITTED DEMAND FOR UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE IN HIS WRITTEN STATEMENT, AND LEFT IT FOR MRS. AQUINO TO MAKE ORALLY, MAY ALSO INDICATE SOME WILLINGNESS ON HIS PART TO BARGAIN ABOUT THAT ISSUE. AS WELL.
SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL PRISONERS, PRISONERS RELEASE, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 MAY 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MANILA06919
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760191-1186
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760542/aaaabjwc.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS, LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS, LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <29 SEP 2004 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CASE OF FORMER SENATOR BENIGNO AQUINO
TAGS: PINS, RP, (AQUINO, BENIGNO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006